

## Equity and its relationship to citizenship education

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In the second half of the seminar, Professor Gorard will draw out the policy implications of some EU-funded research on pupils' views on equity in schools and on the segregation of school intakes across different European countries. In particular, he will argue that in order to assess whether school systems are equitable we need to pay attention to the lived experience of pupils in schools, and that concerns about equality and quality in education need not be in tension with one another. Professor Gorard's argument is that the use of school improvement models has led to an undue emphasis on the most visible indicators of schooling - examination results – which may marginalise other purposes and benefits of schooling. Social, ethnic and economic segregation between schools matters, but not primarily for the sake of test results because, for pupils, schools are their life and not merely a preparation for it. In general the lessons from international studies are that the mix of pupils between schools whether in terms of occupational class, income or sex has little impact on attainment. So policy makers can feel free to use criteria other than effectiveness for deciding on the pattern of intakes to schools including criteria related to equity.

The official use of school improvement models has led to an emphasis on the most visible indicators of schooling - examination results – which may marginalise other purposes and potential benefits of schooling. But, in general, the lessons from international studies are that the mix of pupils between schools, whether in terms of occupational class, income, or sex, has little impact on attainment. So, policy-makers can feel free to use criteria other than effectiveness for deciding on the pattern of intakes to schools. These criteria might include efficiency or convenience, but we could also try equity as a guiding principle. Fairness for individuals, a sense of justice, and social cohesion are as much a product of 'real-life' experiences in schools as they are of the formal educational process. Social, ethnic and economic segregation between schools matters, but not primarily for the sake of test results. For pupils, their schools are their life, and not merely a preparation for it. Equity in schools matters for today, for the range of experiences of each pupil, for social cohesion, and to allow schools to teach important aspects of citizenship without being open to the charge of being hypocritical.

Equity - and its relationship to citizenship education

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In this chapter, we will argue that greater attention to equity in educational systems is important, and suggest ways in which equity can be enhanced – particularly from the perspective of pupils in schools. We start by outlining some ideas about what equity entails, then why equity is important in education, why we might wish to listen more carefully to the views of pupils, and conclude with some examples of the views of pupils about equity, and their implications for school systems.

## What is equity?

‘Equity’ in the sense used in the chapter can represent two related ideas. First, equity is used as a synonym for the terms ‘fair’ and ‘fairness’. It simply means the state, quality, or ideal of being impartial, just, and fair. Secondly, and more importantly, it refers to an attempt to understand how and why we can judge something to be fair or unfair. Of course, there are well-known principles, such as equality of treatment or equal access to opportunities, that purport to lay down what is fair. But as we shall illustrate in this chapter, there is no single principle or set of criteria that adheres in all situations. What underlies our sense of whether a principle, such as equality of treatment, should be applied in a specific situation? Whatever that is, it is what we mean by equity in this second sense. The same situation applies in law, especially in a common-law system such as that in the UK, where the application of previous case law or strict adherence to legislation might give the plaintiff inadequate redress under certain conditions. So equity is like the underlying system of jurisprudence used to supplement and modify common law, where needed, to try and ensure that any outcome is fair.

Without wishing to labour the point, it is important to be clear from the outset that any given criterion intended to enhance justice will be flawed in the sense that it will tend to lead to injustice in some situations. For example, should schools and teachers discriminate between pupils? We would probably not want schools to use more funds to educate boys than girls, or offer different curriculum subjects to different ethnic groups. But we might want schools to use more funds for pupils with learning difficulties, or to respect the right of each pupil to study their first language. Should a teacher be allowed to punish a pupil who misbehaves, or reward a pupil who has shown talent or effort? If so, then the teacher is being discriminating. If we adhere inflexibly to a principle of equality of opportunity, then the likely result in education will be marked inequality of outcomes. Is this acceptable? Those who start with greater talent, who can marshal greater resources at home, are the most interested in education, or who put the most effort into their study will tend to be the most successful. If, on the other hand, we seek greater equality of educational outcomes then we may need to treat individuals unequally from the outset, identifying the most disadvantaged and given them enhanced (and so unequal) opportunities.

Principles of justice, such as equality of treatment, work only in limited contexts, from specific perspectives, and on some occasions. This makes any transparent judgement of fairness a confusing task. Yet our own work with pupil perspectives (see Sundaram et al. 2006, for example) has suggested that individuals show a high level of agreement about whether any situation or treatment is fair, and from this near-consensus we might begin to establish a better idea of what equity means for those participating in education.

Table 1 provides a summary of six possible principles of justice, orthogonal to six possible domains in which pupils might wish to apply these principles. The point made here is that people apply different principles in different settings. For example, a pupil might agree that final outcomes such as public examination results could recognise merit and so differentiate between pupils (A in the table). However, the organisation of school procedures such as parent evenings should not be based on merit but should be open to all equally (B in the table). In education, some assets are, or should be, distributed evenly regardless of

background differences - such as setting an equal teacher:pupil ratio for schools in different regions (C in the table), or equal respect shown to pupils by teachers (D). Other assets are, or might be, distributed in proportion between contribution and reward (E, F) - such as formal qualifications or punishments (Trannoy 1999). Further assets may be deliberately distributed unequally without consideration of contribution, such as greater attention given to disadvantaged pupils (G). All of these actions could be defended as equitable by the same person, apparently consistently, as they strive to remain fair while respecting differences between individuals or groups of pupils. Our research with pupils shows that individuals do hold these differing views at the same time, varying their use between discourse and practice, in different domains (EGREES 2005). Views even vary according to pupils' recent experience. For example, when pupils are made to work on an individual basis in school they tend to favour the principle of recognising merit. But pupils asked to work co-operatively in classrooms tend to favour equality (Lerner 1980).

Table 1 - Some principles of justice and the domains in which they might be applied

Principles	School procedures	Classroom interaction	Regular assessments	Final outcomes	Family and home	Wider society
Equal outcome	C					
Equal opportunity	B					
Recognise merit				A		
Respect individual		D				
Fair procedures		F		E		
Appropriate treatment	G					

Each row in Table 1 could be further sub-divided, so that respect for the individual encompasses respect for personal autonomy, respect for differences between individuals, and the protection of a pupil's self-esteem. Equality of outcome could refer to the outcomes for all or, more narrowly, equality of outcomes for individuals of equivalent talent (Rawls 1971), or equality between socio-economic groups. It could refer to equal achievement for equivalent work. Fairness of procedures could include equality before the 'law', either consistent or flexible interpretation of rules, or transparency, or the level of pupil participation in procedures. Similarly, appropriateness of treatment could involve no discrimination or positive discrimination, unequal resources between advantaged and disadvantaged but equal resources for equal talent (Trannoy 1999), proportionate punishment for transgression, proportionate reward for performance, effort, or improvement, and proportionate final outcomes for performance, effort, or improvement. All of these could be considered 'fair', but many of them would be contradictory if applied together in the same domains (Dubet 2006).

Some of the principles lead to disputed concepts, even in isolation. For example, respect for the autonomy of the individual has been proposed as just (Jansen et al. 2006), but can be considered anti-educational if the purpose of education is to open minds to new ideas. To

encourage autonomy in the sense of making people ignore expert advice might be considered ill-judged, for example, if it poses a risk to health, or safety (Hand 2006). Each column in Table 1 could also be further sub-divided, so that final outcomes might include minimum educational thresholds, such as basic literacy, which it would be fair for everyone to attain, and also graded examination results which it might be fair to allocate on merit.

Of course, there will also be other important dimensions behind the table – such as the origin and victim of any injustice. The former might include authorities, schools, teachers, other pupils, and family members. The latter could be the individual, others such as peers or friends, a category of pupils, or all pupils. The combination of actors involved might affect our judgement about whether any principle should apply in a particular domain. We might be concerned about sub-groups of pupils, and wish to offer an advantage to those from a disadvantaged group from which the individual cannot ‘escape. Thus, geographic, institutional and linguistic differences may be less important than family background, sex, or innate disability. However, there is also a view that any difference, in itself, is not unjust and so an inequality is only unjust precisely insofar as it can be avoided (Whitehead 1991). Responsibility theory (Roemer 1996, Fleurbaey 1996) suggests a fair allocation of resources between individuals defined by their ‘talent’ – for which they are not responsible – and their ‘effort’ – for which they are. However, even this falls down if effort is the product of motivation, which is itself a product of socio-economic background for which individuals are not responsible.

### **Why equity matters**

From 1996, the Council of Europe expressed concern over the dangers of intolerance within each country towards elements of society deemed different, such as recent in-migrants and local ethnic minorities. This concern was one part of the drive towards the establishment of the Crick committee in the UK that would, in turn, lead to the compulsory National Curriculum for citizenship in England (Davies et al. 2005). Citizenship education has been presented by government as the means by which societal problems can be ameliorated, because it has important implications for developing students’ perceptions about what it is to be part of an equitable and democratic society. The teaching of citizenship and democracy is, purportedly, needed to counter ‘worrying levels of apathy, ignorance and cynicism about public life’ (QCA 1998, p.8). The model for citizenship teaching has, at its foundation, a curriculum based around the key concepts of ‘fairness, rights and responsibilities’ (p.20), which seeks to encourage in pupils ‘self-confidence and socially and morally responsible behaviour both in and beyond the classroom, towards those in authority and towards each other’ (DfES 2002), to such an extent as to cause ‘no less than a change in the political culture of this country both nationally and locally’ (QCA 1998, p.7). Close to the heart of developing a model of democratic citizenship among students is the need to encourage children to develop their own concepts of fairness, and probably the fundamental influence on pupils in developing their perceptions of what constitutes a fair and equitable society is their experience of school (Wilson 1959, Howard and Gill 2000).

The problems here are two-fold. Schools in England, as elsewhere, are not structured, nor pupil places allocated, on the basis of fairness alone. Thus, pupils can experience dissonance

between what they are being told and the way they live their lives in school. Secondly, and inevitably perhaps, some pupils report being treated unfairly – including being despised and humiliated by their teachers (Dubet 1999, Merle 2002). Across school systems, we know that some pupils are treated unfairly by some teachers, and that this has been the case for some time (Sirota 1988, Spender 1982).

In a series of previous publications, sometimes with colleagues, we have illustrated clear differences between varying national systems of allocating pupils to secondary schools and the ensuing clustered nature of the intake to each school (EGREES 2005). The OECD-funded Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) studies were conducted in 2000 and 2003 (OECD 2007). In general, countries with selective school systems, whether by ability, ability to pay, or religious belief, have the most clustered schools in terms of reading scores. Austria, for example, had a tracked system in which 62% of the weakest readers would have to exchange schools for these to be evenly distributed between schools. Sweden, on the other hand, had a local comprehensive system of allocating school places, in which only 29% of the weakest readers would have to exchange schools for these to be evenly distributed between schools (Gorard and Smith 2004). In addition, the figures for both 2000 and 2003 show there is a strong link between clustering by ability/attainment and clustering by social and ethnic background of the pupils. For example, Sweden has one of the lowest scores for clustering by reading score, and also by parental occupation. Luxembourg has a low score for clustering on all three measures, including non-native students. Austria has high scores for clustering on both measures and also the clustering of students born outside the country. All other things being equal, systems without tiering or selection by the schools have lower intake segregation (Gorard 2007).

The same thing applies to regions and local areas. In the UK, for example, local areas that retain selection to grammar schools have higher levels of pupil segregation by poverty than areas using non-selective systems (Gorard et al. 2003). The same also applies to the clustering of pupils in specific schools by ethnicity, country of origin, first language, and specific learning difficulties. There is no evidence here of a sustained advantage from having a segregated system, in terms of test scores, and these findings are confirmed by a number of other analyses (Haahr et al. 2005, Gorard 2006).

In terms of creating students' awareness of equity, tolerance and democracy, the mixture of pupils in a school does appear to matter however (Halstead and Taylor 2000). Inclusive schools are generally more tolerant (Slee 2001), and exhibit that tolerance in racial, social and religious terms, and this is also associated with greater civic awareness (Schagen 2002). The level of ethnic, and other, segregation between schools can affect racial attitudes, subsequent social and economic outcomes, and patterns of residential segregation (Clotfelter 2001). The experience of Northern Ireland shows that, if true, this school outcome can be a force for even greater societal segregation (Smith 2003), and that teachers become unwilling even to discuss issues of sectarianism with their (segregated) students (Mansell 2005). So, in divided societies, citizenship education can generate negative results, including the ghettoisation of minority communities, perhaps culminating in greater social unrest as it has in some central European countries (Print and Coleman 2003). Tracking from an early age can also have a dispiriting effect on the lifelong aspirations of the majority (Gorard and Rees 2002, Casey et al. 2006).

One of the purposes of compulsory education in developed countries is to try and compensate for early disadvantage. Integrated, rather than selective or tracked, school systems seem to lead to the desirable outcome that a pupil's achievement depends less on their social and cultural background (Dupriez and Dumray 2006). Although most egalitarian school systems are also set in countries with egalitarian structures and income equality anyway, these systems are designed to delay for as long as possible the separation of pupils by attainment (Boudon 1973). This allows most time for schools to counteract resource differences.

Whatever the school system, we know that disadvantaged pupils tend to make less progress than other pupils during any given school phase, especially where they are clustered together (Duru-Bellat and Mingat 1997), perhaps because they have poorer learning conditions than other pupils (Grisay 1997). Thus, pupils' experiences of justice and, especially, injustice could undermine their interpersonal and institutional trust, promote passive attitudes towards political and civic participation, generate intolerance towards others who are clearly 'different', and even lead them to doubt whether an equitable existence is possible.

### **Pupils' views of equity**

To understand more about equity in education, it is important to ask the participants themselves. The views of pupils are still surprisingly scarce in education research, despite pupils' clear competence as commentators (Wood 2003). This absence is perhaps particularly marked for pupils in already marginalised groups (Rose and Shevlin 2004, Hamill and Boyd 2002). The skewed representation of pupils in the literature towards those already possessing advantages (Reay 2006) may lead to the 'uncritical adoption' of their partial view as an accurate reflection of all pupils' experiences and views of schooling and justice in school (Noyes 2005, p.537). Thus, it is important in understanding more about equity to seek out the views of all, including the most disadvantaged and least likely to speak out. This is what we are doing in a series of EU-funded studies (<http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/educ/equity/Socrates2005/Socrates%20home.htm>).

The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child asserts that children and young people have the right to express their opinions on all matters affecting them. The Convention calls upon governments and agencies working with young people to acknowledge and act upon the views expressed in relation to decisions which directly affect their lives. Therefore, as education concerns its pupils, so they should be consulted seriously about its conduct and reform (Fielding and Bragg 2003), and treated with respect in its implementation (Osler 2000). The introduction of citizenship education into the National Curriculum for England in 2002 brought attention to the potential of pupil voice in contributing to learning processes, and stimulated debate about the links between pupils' experiences of fairness, democracy and participation in school and their views and expectations as citizens in society (DfES 2002).

This is not something that is worth doing half-heartedly. In health studies, by way of analogy, it has been found that talking and teaching about healthy eating for pupils is largely ineffective unless the school also adopts a health-promoting whole-school approach, most

obviously in its catering, but also by listening to and incorporating pupils' opinions/views on food, bodies and health (Christensen 2004). In the same way, pupil participation in citizenship may be best 'taught' by engaging pupils as active partners in school processes and not merely by its inclusion in the curriculum. This means moving away from a situation in which pupils largely experience schooling as something that is done to them, and in which they simply learn to perform in order to succeed (Duffield et al. 2000). If citizenship studies is to promote a climate of tolerance, democratic dialogue, respect for human rights and cultural diversity (Osler and Starkey 2006), then these characteristics must be made manifest in the structure and organisation of the school. Schools that model democratic values by promoting an open climate for discussion are more likely to be effective in promoting both civic knowledge and civic engagement among their students (Civic Education Study 2001, Torney-Purta et al. 2001).

Despite increasing prominence being given to pupil voice in official circles (such as the inspection system in England) and by schools, the extent to which pupils' views are listened to and used in genuinely democratic processes over which students can claim ownership are often 'compromised by political structures determined by adults' (Wyness 2006, p.209). And, in many cases, the clear purpose of engaging with pupils like this is to increase student performance and attainment in academic terms (Noyes 2005), or to improve pupil self-confidence (Rose et al. 1999). There is little sense that pupils might actually have sound views on equity and fairness in school processes, and that listening to them should be an aspect of democratic schooling that seeks to shape well-informed and critical citizens. Further, that engaging with pupil views could not only lead to real educational reform (Pomeroy 1999), but may have longer-term implications for young people's self-perceived capabilities, resources and values as citizens. The actual impact of suggestions or decisions made by student groups is often very limited (TES 2006). While participatory and democratic initiatives such as school councils are now widespread in England, a limited and highly selected proportion of students actually tend to be involved (Wyness 2006). There is little progress in terms of actually giving pupils a democratic say in the way their schools are run, or in facilitating their participation in, and contribution to, their local community.

In general, based on our re-analysis of the PISA 2003 data, pupils' attitudes to school and their 'senses of belonging' are somewhat worse in countries with segregated systems of schools (Gorard 2007). In the Netherlands, for example, with a relatively segregated system, there is a very large difference in the attitudes of native-born and other pupils. The non-native pupils are much less enthusiastic about school. In a separate survey of 6,000 school students in five EU countries, pupils in countries with more segregated systems tend to report greater favouritism for one or more groups of pupils. Often, it was the girls, the brighter children, and those from richer families, who were thought to benefit from more favourable treatment. Pupils generally reported favouring an egalitarian system where all students were treated in the same way. In most countries a considerable number of pupils thought that the least able should receive more support and attention in class (Smith and Gorard 2006). This view was particularly marked among students who reported achieving low marks. In the UK, the overwhelming majority believed that all pupils should receive the same attention. There was almost no support in any of the countries for the notion that able students should receive the most attention.



The clear opinion among pupils across all countries and groups is that many schools do generally provide the same quality of education for all students (around 75% reported this in all countries). There is also some limited support, especially in France and Spain, for the idea that schools actually provide a better education for the most able. There is almost no support for the idea that schools are providing a better education for the least able. Therefore, all systems are seen to be failing to meet one specific demand for equity. Other than in the UK, there is considerable disparity between the proportion of students wanting a system in which less able students receive more attention (around 40%) and the proportion who experience this in their school. For example, in Italy, 46% of students felt that secondary schools should provide more attention to the least able students, whereas only 10% report that this was actually the case in their country. Conversely, only around 2% of students had reported wanting a system which gave more attention to the most able, whereas around 20% reported experiencing such a system.

There is enough evidence from these and other studies to suggest that segregated school systems could endanger pupils' attitudes to schools and sense of belonging. It could be thought that pupils' experiences of equity and citizenship in an educational context may impact upon their perceived and actual trajectories in education. This link may be particularly pertinent in an era when purportedly disaffected and alienated (ethnic minority) youth are presented as a threat to social cohesion within and across communities, in many European countries.

## **Discussion**

If the argument so far is accepted, we may conclude that equity is difficult to define but that it represents that sense of fairness which underlies our decisions about the principles of justice to apply in different domains for a given set of actors. In specific situations there is considerable agreement, among pupils, about what is fair and what is unfair. Equity is an important ideal for education, in terms of school as a lived experience as well as its longer-term outcomes for citizens and society. Pupils have quite clear views on what is fair, and are generally willing and able to express those views.

Most available evidence suggests that pupils with differing characteristics should be mixed in schools, rather than clustered by ability, sex, faith, finance, or country of origin. Pupils in more segregated school systems report experiencing more unfairness. It seems that fairness for individuals, a sense of justice, and social cohesion and belonging are as much a product of experiences in schools, as lived in, as they are of the formal educational process. The mix of students in a school therefore matters more for social cohesion than school improvement (Gorard et al. 2003). An interesting finding to emerge from these considerations, and one which has implications for implementing an effective curriculum for citizenship in schools, is that teachers were not always perceived to be treating students fairly and consistently. There is a difference here between the personal experience of the pupils, and their perception of the treatment of a minority of others. A common view was that teachers had pupils who were their favourites, that rewards and punishments were not always applied fairly, and that certain groups of students were treated less fairly than others.

Citizenship is about developing social and moral responsibility, and 'entails treating young people with respect and giving them meaningful fora in which their views can be aired' (Kerr 2003, p.28). How can a curriculum for citizenship, which embraces issues of fairness and democracy, be effectively implemented if the students themselves do not mostly believe that their teachers are generally capable of such behaviour? In one sense, it does not really matter what the curriculum states about citizenship compared to the importance for students of experiencing mixed ethnic, sex and religious groups in non-racist and non-sexist settings, and of genuine participation in the decision-making of the schools. Schools, in their structure and organisation, can do more than simply reflect the society we have; they can try to be the precursor of the kind of society that we wish to have.

### **Why does it matter who goes to school with whom?**

Universal education is generally considered important in developed societies for a number of reasons. An educated workforce may promote economic growth and competitiveness, while widespread basic skills might enhance social inclusion. Schooling may also act to socialise young people, transmit society's norms, and, according to some, help to produce a docile population. Free compulsory schooling is intended to equalise life chances, making learning less dependent upon home circumstances. However, it may also assist families in reproducing their relative economic and societal advantages. The research evidence on all of these issues – such as whether schools overcome or actually reinforce social divisions - tends to be incomplete and confusing. The conclusions drawn from research depends upon the precise wording of each question, the age and stage of the learners involved, the historical period covered by the research, and the local nature of schools and their organisation. Here, I would like to focus on the research relevant to one of these issues in the current context of the UK. This issue is the school mix. In other words - why does it matter who goes to school with whom?

### **School mix and attainment**

One possible answer to this question is that there is a peer group effect, such that schools with a large number of pupils who are considered easy to teach will have a considerable advantage over schools with more troubled pupils. This could lead to the first type of school getting even higher attainment for their already-advantaged pupils. Schools with high concentrations of pupils considered harder to teach may have associated multiple disadvantages leading to lower than expected attainment for their pupils. There is research claiming to show that this is so (Thrupp 1999). Schools in disadvantaged areas may have more marginalised pupils (those avoiding or excluded from school), more recent in-migrants (for whom English is their second language), more travellers (or others who make frequent changes of school), more children with learning difficulties, and so on. These relative disadvantages could be compounded by poor inner-city buildings and facilities, less-qualified staff, and fewer highly-educated and supportive parents. In these circumstances, it seems entirely plausible that a two-tier system of schools could emerge with the already advantaged pupils tending to benefit even more from their clustering in specific schools.

However, it is also important to realise that we need research in the social sciences precisely because we cannot rely merely on what sounds plausible, or on what theory predicts. Clearly disadvantaged pupils *do* tend to have lower levels of attainment in public examinations than advantaged pupils. This is almost a tautology, bound up in what we mean by 'disadvantaged'. Thus, schools with high levels of disadvantaged pupils will tend to have lower average results, and this is what we find in league tables. But this is very far from saying that the advantaged pupils would have done significantly worse, or the disadvantaged pupils significantly better, if they had been educated in another school with a different mix of pupils (Gorard 2000).

### **How can we research this issue?**

We cannot conduct research that involves the same pupil going to two different schools and then seeing the difference in their results. Nor, for practical and ethical reasons, is it feasible to allocate pupils randomly to schools on an experimental basis. So, as researchers, we are left with the far less satisfactory task of trying to match pupils in terms of their relative advantages and then seeing how well they do in different schools. One result is clear and undisputed. *The vast majority of the difference between schools in terms of exam results can be explained by the expected attainment of their pupil intake, taking into account prior attainment and background characteristics such as class, ethnicity and sex.*

Less clear is the meaning, if any, of the small remaining differences (residuals) between schools once the results have been statistically adjusted for their pupil intake. Some commentators believe that these residuals are evidence of a peer group effect as discussed above. However, large international studies show no clear pattern of relationship between test scores and the extent to which similar pupils are clustered in the same schools. Some commentators believe that the remaining differences between school outcomes represent a so-called 'school effect' created by better teaching, ethos, leadership and so on. However, others see what is left over as the product of *errors*, created by imperfections in testing, measuring, recording, matching equivalent pupils, and analysing the data (Gorard 2006). The larger the study, the more information available about each pupil, and the more reliable the measures are, the stronger the link between school intake and outcomes. Thus, to a very large extent it does not matter, *in exam terms*, who goes to school with whom.

### **School mix and equity**

Another possible reason why it *does* matter who goes to school with whom concerns the role of schools in building an inclusive society. Even if the school mix is not a clear factor in enhancing exam scores, it may still be important in helping to enhance a sense of what is just and appropriate for pupils.

From 1996, the Council of Europe expressed concern over the dangers of intolerance within each country towards elements of society deemed *different*, such as recent in-migrants and local ethnic minorities. In England, this concern led to the introduction of the compulsory National Curriculum for citizenship studies. Citizenship education has been presented by the government as the means by which many societal problems can be tackled, by developing pupils' perceptions about what it is to be part of a fair and democratic society (QCA 1998).

*The fundamental influence on pupils in developing their perceptions of what constitutes a fair society is probably their experience of school. The intake to a school may matter because it provides the context for creating pupils' awareness of equity (fairness).*

The level of ethnic, and other, segregation in schools can affect racial attitudes, subsequent social and economic outcomes, and patterns of residential segregation. The experience of Northern Ireland suggests that separate schools can be a force for even greater societal segregation, and that teachers then become unwilling even to discuss issues of sectarianism with their (segregated) pupils. So, in divided societies, citizenship education can actually generate negative results. In general, attitudes to school, and a feeling of belonging to society, are somewhat *worse* in countries with school systems in which pupils tend to go to school with others like them (rather than a social mix). International studies suggest that such socially-segregated school systems endanger pupils' sense of belonging, and give no clear gain in exam scores. Inclusive schools are generally more socially and racially tolerant. There can also be peer effects of the school intake on patterns of participation and social inclusion in later life (Gorard and Rees 2002). In fact, the simple act of separating pupils of different types between schools, whether by race, class or ability, might be considered an affront (Massey and Denton 1998).

### **Controlling the school mix**

If either of the reasons discussed above is correct, then controlling the school mix could be one of the most important educational tasks facing central and local government. What does research tell us about this?

The findings here are reasonably clear, if not always politically palatable. The pupil body in most schools tends to reflect the nature and cost of local housing more than anything else, and this leads to segregation and ghettoisation. In order to achieve mixed intakes to schools, the system has to be comprehensive in nature, and without curricular specialisation, religious identity, and financial or academic selection. The same admissions criteria should apply to every school. Places at school should not be strictly allocated by geography; poorer families should have a choice of school; area-banding by ability could be used, and disputed places could be allocated by lottery (Gorard et al. 2003).

In the UK, regions and local areas that retain selection to grammar schools have higher levels of pupil segregation by poverty than areas using non-selective systems. Once the nature of local housing patterns is taken into account, the least segregated areas are those with no selection by schools, little or no diversification of school types, where choice prevails over the rigid allocation of school place via catchment areas, and finally where schools are constrained to admit a proportion of pupils across all of the ability bands represented in the area ('banding').

### **International comparisons**

There are differences between varying national systems of allocating pupils to secondary schools and the ensuing clustered nature of the intake to each school (EGREES 2005). For example, countries such as Germany with a system of allocating school places by ability, at

the time of writing, have much higher segregation of rich and poor pupils between schools than countries such as Finland which have no such selection by ability. Countries with selective school systems, whether by academic ability, ability to pay, or religious belief, have the most clustered schools in terms of test scores and various measures of socio-economic status such as parental qualification, parental education, and occupation. Overall, the Scandinavian countries of Sweden, Finland and Denmark show less clustering on most indicators of pupil disadvantage, while Germany, Greece and Belgium show the most. Unsurprisingly, policies for allocating school places seem to make a difference to school intakes (Eurydice 2007). Comprehensive systems of schools based on parental preference rather than selection or geographical criteria such as zoning tend to produce narrower social differences in both intake and outcomes. Countries like New Zealand that have experimented with allocating places at popular schools via a lottery have experienced sudden drops in social segregation.

## Discussion

The official use of school improvement models has led to an emphasis on the most visible indicators of schooling - examination results – which may marginalise other purposes and potential benefits of schooling. But, in general, the lessons from international studies are that the mix of pupils between schools, whether in terms of occupational class, income, or sex, has no impact on attainment (Haahr et al. 2005). So, we can feel free to use criteria other than effectiveness for deciding on the pattern of intakes to schools. These criteria might include efficiency or convenience, but we could also try equity as a guiding principle. This was the approach that led to comprehensive schools in most of the UK.

It seems that fairness for individuals, a sense of justice, and social cohesion are as much a product of ‘real-life’ experiences in schools as they are of the formal educational process. Social, ethnic and economic segregation between schools matters, but not primarily for the sake of test results. For pupils, their schools *are* their life, and not merely a preparation for it. Equity in schools matters for today, for the range of experiences of each pupil, for social cohesion, and to allow schools to teach important aspects of citizenship without being open to the charge of being hypocritical. It may not make sense to have a society preaching racial tolerance within a racially segregated school system, for example. Schools, in their structure and organisation, can do more than simply reflect the society we *actually* have; they can try to be the precursor of the kind of society that we *wish* to have.

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